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ABSTRACT

Current studies suggest that school districts may not be hiring the most promising graduates of teacher training programs. The first chapter of this publication reviews this research and proposes three possible explanations for the hiring failures: the complexity of the teaching function, insufficient attention to hiring, and inadequate selection techniques. Because teaching is complex, basic skills standards should only be used to establish minimum competency levels rather than desirable levels, high cognitive ability should be prized, and the personal and social skills of candidates should be examined carefully. Attention to recruitment of superior applicants is essential if highly qualified candidates are to be available for selection. Careful and thorough use of interviewing techniques by trained interviewers can improve the selection process in many cases, but additional materials such as transcripts, references, test scores, and such samples of work as videotaped demonstrations should be considered. The second chapter of the report describes ways in which representative Oregon school districts allocate their resources to recruit and select the most qualified candidates. The third chapter summarizes effective employment practices and offers recommendations for both large and small districts. (PGD)

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Mary Cihak Jensen

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Oregon School Study Council
1787 Agate Street
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403
(503) 686-5045

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Preface

Selecting teachers may be the most important task school administrators face. Each time a teacher is hired, the local school and its district have an opportunity to improve instructional programs. Current studies suggest, however, that school districts may not be investing sufficient time, energy, and money in the recruitment and selection of teachers.

This Bulletin begins with a discussion of the challenges districts face in their efforts to hire the most qualified teachers. Next, it studies several examples of Oregon school districts that commit resources to the recruitment and selection of teachers. Finally, author Mary Cihak Jensen outlines recommendations for school districts that desire to strengthen their educational programs through effective employment strategies. Jensen, an OSSC graduate research assistant and a doctoral candidate in the University of Oregon's educational psychology division, is currently conducting research that compares teachers' characteristics to their employment and performance histories.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

Nearly one million teachers will be hired in the United States between now and 1990. This presents a "window of opportunity" for school districts, according to Edwin M. Bridges. The quality of any school district depends more upon the quality of its staff than upon any other factor. A major influx of new teachers provides districts with the opportunity to initiate policies that will further improve classroom teaching.

Yet, like many other opportunities, this one is fraught with perils as well as possibilities. Estimating that 5 percent of teachers currently employed in United States public schools could be considered incompetent, Bridges warns that the history of inadequate teachers will repeat itself unless better selection methods are devised. He recommends concentrating scarce district resources on the selection, evaluation, and development of probationary teachers.

The second chapter of this Bulletin describes some of the ways in which representative Oregon school districts allocate their resources to recruit and select the most qualified teacher candidates. A preliminary discussion in chapter 1 outlines the perils of inadequate employment strategies and argues for thorough investigation of each applicant. The final chapter summarizes effective employment practices and offers recommendations for both large and small school districts that wish to capitalize upon the coming "window of opportunity."

Perils within the Teacher Selection Process

Current studies suggest that school districts may not be hiring the most promising graduates of teacher training programs. This chapter presents that research and proposes three possible explanations: (1) the complexity of the teaching function, (2) insufficient attention to hiring, and (3) inadequate selection techniques.

The Complexity of the Teaching Function

Teaching is a complex task. Teachers judge and organize curriculum, orchestrate simultaneous learning activities, diagnose group and individual needs, participate in school decision-making, advise parents, represent the school in the local community, and enhance students' academic and emotional health. In fact, the act of teaching is so complex that it defies attempts to describe it fully or to measure it accurately.

This lack of description and measurement makes the selection of capable teachers particularly difficult. When teachers are expected to perform such a variety of functions, how does a personnel director or school principal assess so many abilities? Clearly no one measure or test can assess a candidate's potential as a teacher.

The dilemma of the small school can be particularly perplexing. Teachers in small schools may need a wide range of abilities and certification in more than one area or level. In addition, they may need to adjust to the community--to its expectations, its lifestyle, and its available support systems. Often the teacher in a rural school must be capable of a high degree of autonomy: supervision may be remote.

Tests of Basic Skills

Since 1977, national concern over public school students' declining test scores has brought attention to the quality of the nation's teachers and to their process of certification. Standardized tests of competency have become an increasingly popular

answer to the country's concern. Some states, now including Oregon, require passing scores on basic skills tests before admission to teachers' training; others mandate basic skills or pedagogical examinations prior to certification. In twelve states teachers are tested both before entry into training institutions and before certification.

The tests may aid in screening out candidates with failing scores, but they are not intended as predictive instruments that would help districts screen in candidates with superior skills. Although the tests satisfy some of the demand for higher standards, they may function better as symbolic actions than as total answers to the teacher competency issue.

General Cognitive Ability

An increasingly accepted theory in industrial psychology says that employees' general cognitive ability predicts their knowledge of a job and therefore their performance in that job. The more complex the job, the more the generalization applies: higher ability workers are faster in cognitive operations on the job, better able to prioritize between conflicting rules, better able to adapt old procedures to new situations, and better able to learn quickly as the job changes over time (Hunter).

The complexity of the teaching function clearly demands high cognitive skills. Teachers must be life-long learners who are able to update continuously their base of knowledge, to use new strategies, and to adapt to changing student and community needs.

The question of teachers' cognitive ability is frequently raised in procedures for the dismissal of incompetent teachers. Investigations of teachers dismissed for incompetency show that, in specifying the teachers' deficiencies, supervisors emphasize lack of skill and ability to perform instructional duties, weak intellectual ability, inadequate knowledge of subject matter, and poor judgment skills (Bridges).

Personal Skills

Yet cognitive skills alone do not make a teacher. A combination of intellectual and personality factors predicts success as a teacher. J. C. Sisk says it is personal and social characteristics that "make a teacher out of a scholar." Because a combination of factors predicts success in the classroom, districts must consider a combination of factors in their selection process. After they screen candidates for cognitive ability and achievement, school districts must also seek signs of commitment, integrity, empathy, energy, and, yes, magic. The selection of teachers is as complicated a task as the teaching function itself.

Insufficient Attention to Hiring

Although many superintendents and principals nationwide believe that the hiring of teachers is one of their most important functions, they do not allocate a significant amount of time and finances to this effort (Natter and Kuder). Most of the nation's school districts do not have established policies for the selection of employees. Although district leaders would agree that the selection of teachers is the key to a school's progress, most administrators lack training in valid systems that would increase their chances of choosing the best candidate (Kahl).

Recruitment

The forecast of a nationwide shortage of teachers is prompting more districts to pay close attention to the first step in teacher selection--recruitment. Districts with rapidly growing enrollments find that they can no longer wait for applicants to come to them: they recruit aggressively on college campuses and at recruitment conventions. In some states, both inner-city and rural school districts attract applicants with promises of benefits ranging from supportive inservice to reductions in their rent payments.

Oregon's educational leaders do not all agree that the state will suffer a teacher shortage in this decade. The teacher Standards and Practices Commission predicts "only modest, regional shortages":

> Oregon salaries are competitive with those of neighboring states and living conditions in the Northwest are attractive to teachers from out of state. A reserve pool of teachers exists throughout the Northwest and vacancies are currently being filled from that reserve pool. (Myton)

Diane Dunlap, assistant dean of the University of Oregon's College of Education, is one who disagrees. She says it is "anyone's guess" whether or not the "reserve pool" of certificated teachers contains substantial numbers of people willing to return to teaching. "It is impossible to ignore the problem developing around us. Even if we in Oregon have enough teachers, other states will be or are coming to get them."

Further, the size of an applicant pool does not guarantee the quality of the applicants. Even a large reserve of candidates may not include enough applicants who fit districts' specific needs, nor does it guarantee highly qualified teachers.

Larry Sconce, assistant superintendent of Roseburg School

District, and Jamon Kent, personnel director of Beaverton School District, are two administrators who see a decline in the number of applicants for teaching jobs, particularly in specialized areas. Both have committed additional time to their recruitment efforts, predicting that districts that neglect recruitment will find themselves without a sufficient number of qualified candidates.

Choosing the Best Qualified

A lack of attention to teacher selection in the nation's school districts may partially explain the results of three recent studies. Each of the three studies supports a theory proposed in 1979 by W. Timothy Weaver: methods used to select and place teachers do not result in more academically competent teachers being selected. One study (Perry) found that candidates with the highest grade point average, the best evaluation of their student teaching performance, and the strongest professional recommendations were not favored in hiring.

In the second study (also reported by Perry), even a period of teacher surplus did not guarantee that districts would hire the best qualified candidate. In Dallas in 1977, a year and place where teacher candidates were plentiful, 55 percent of the newly hired teachers failed a basic skills test whereas 36 percent of the total number of applicants failed. Deficiencies in the hiring process seemed to have actually favored those applicants who failed above those who would produce higher scores.

The third study, by Beverly Browne of Oregon State University and Richard Rankin of the University of Oregon, found that an applicant's superior cognitive skills did not predict his or her employment as a teacher. In fact, being rated as "bright" by a college supervising teacher negatively related to employment. Apparently characteristics of the teacher candidates other than their ability and achievement have been favored in teacher selection.

Inadequate Selection Techniques

The process by which teachers nationwide are commonly selected may explain in some part why the "best" in terms of academic and performance ratings are not necessarily the first to be hired. The consensus of research findings is that in American schools untrained administrators often fail to gather multiple information about candidates. Decisions to hire teachers may be based too often on incomplete selection procedures.

Interview

In particular, the interview is the most widely used selection technique and the technique most influential in hiring decisions. Yet the interview, if used incorrectly, is neither valid nor reliable. The average interview may stand little chance of being a representative "slice" of the applicant's life, an accurate measure of a teacher's competence. Typically the interview is unstructured, lasts less than one hour, and is highly influenced by first impressions, appearance, nonverbal behavior, and conversational skills.

Some studies suggest that interviewers may arrive at their decision to hire or reject an applicant within the first five minutes of the interview. The remainder of the interview can become a seeking of supportive evidence for the predetermined choice. That early decision can be biased by what business calls "the old school tie syndrome," the tendency of interviewers to prefer applicants similar to themselves (Webster).

School principals apparently are not immune to that syndrome. One study found that principals are attracted to persons of like attitudes: attitude congruence between the interviewers and candidates predicted hiring better than did their qualifications for the job (Merritt). If this "matching" of applicants and employers occurs naturally, are teacher candidates selected because they in some way match a school's current quality? If so, strong schools get stronger, weak schools weaker.

The much-maligned interview is not, however, without promise. An interview helps employers measure a candidate's important social and personal characteristics. The reliability of the technique increases when interviews are structured: when candidates are asked the same questions they in effect "run the same course." Conducting a thorough job analysis prior to the interview and using a selection team, rather than an individual interviewer, improves interviews.

Districts can improve interviews by recognizing that not all employees are equally adept at interviewing candidates. In a U.S. Department of Education research report reprinted by the Oregon Board of Education, districts are advised to select interviewers who have these qualifications:

--alertness to cues
--ability to make fine distinctions, perceive accurately
--ability to make immediate and accurate records
--willingness to use criteria established by the organization
--ability to suppress biases

More Direct Measures

Most important, the information gathered in the interview should be considered with information gathered from a variety of other sources: application form, transcripts, student teaching performance, references, and test scores. Placing the right teacher in the right school at the right time demands that employers seek a wide range of information about each applicant.

Even a thick file of scores and references for a candidate may not, however, accurately measure the individual's skills in teaching. It is not common among school districts to use direct work sample tests, but perhaps it should be. Industry commonly uses work sample measures, tests designed to show more precisely the exact skills necessary for a specific job. For example, an individual applying for a position as a typist would take a typing test. Candidates for teaching positions could be asked to produce live or videotaped demonstrations of their work as instructors. Alternatively, interviewers could request a written lesson plan designed to teach a specified objective.

Recruiting and selecting the most capable teachers may demand that a district invest even more than time and money: thoroughness and ingenuity are needed to accurately measure a candidate's potential.

Oregon Schools Respond to the Challenges of Selection

In this chapter, outstanding Oregon educators share their methods for the recruitment and selection of teachers. Although their strategies differ widely, their goals are the same: finding the best qualified teachers for their schools. Most of the individuals interviewed here are active in the Oregon School Personnel Administrators Association, a group committed to improving the quality of the state's schools through effective personnel processes.

Members of that association have served on the Oregon State Department of Education Personnel Management Advisory Committee that developed policy guidelines for employee recruitment and selection. Those guidelines are available from the office of Milt Baum, Associate Superintendent, Oregon Department of Education.

Recruiting for Larger Districts

Gerry Elstun, president of the Oregon School Personnel Administrators Association and assistant superintendent of the Hillsboro Unified School District, believes that the projected shortage of teachers in certain geographical regions and subject areas means that districts need to put new energy into recruitment efforts. He considers the energy a good investment: "The selection of each new teacher gives districts one chance to improve educational programs." Elstun believes that school districts can learn from industry's active recruitment efforts on college campuses. He recommends that districts invite capable students majoring in education to visit their schools, observe their programs, or participate in student teaching experiences. Continued contact with the most promising students increases the strength of their relationship to the district.

The Douglas County School District in the Roseburg area has already experienced a significant decrease in the number of applications for teaching positions. In particular, Larry Sconce, assistant superintendent, has difficulty filling vacancies in special education, counseling, library science, vocational education, and music. Sconce is recruiting widely within Oregon

and will attend the spring regional recruiting fair at the University of Montana, hoping to attract top candidates from other states. Regional recruiting fairs, until recently considered a technique of the past, are increasingly popular solutions to personnel directors' dilemmas. The lost art of recruiting appears to have been reborn.

Jamon Kent is another Oregon educator who does not believe the optimistic prediction that Oregon will escape a teacher shortage. Shortage or not, his strategy as personnel director of the Beaverton School District is to seek out the most qualified candidates in the Northwest. For years he has maintained an active recruiting program and a system for constantly updating his applicant file.

Kent stretches the personnel resources of his own office in another way. A former administrator who retired under the district's incentive retirement plan now acts as a personnel department consultant, aiding Kent in reviewing teacher applications.

Recruiting for the Rural School

Marvel Lamb, superintendent of Scotts Mills School District in Marion County, views recruitment as a combination of search, salesmanship, and followup. Lamb leads a rural school of 9 teachers and 150 students in grades 1 through 8: she clearly has no personnel department to recruit and select staff members. Instead, Lamb expends considerable energy to find and employ the state's most capable teachers. "It doesn't matter that my process is time-consuming," she says. "What can be more important than finding the right teacher for these children?"

Her search is enhanced by the relationships she maintains with university placement officers and with student teacher supervisors. "They know me and they know my school." They probably also know by now that Lamb wants and gets top candidates. When she came to Scotts Mills seven years ago, she had six applicants for a teaching position; after energetic recruitment at the universities, she now considers up to sixty applicants for each position.

After reviewing candidates' applications and checking their references, Lamb selects several for personal interviews. Her welcome is sincere and her questions are probing:

> My first efforts are to make the candidate comfortable. I invite the applicant to tour the school and to share coffee or tea before I begin our interview. I want each one to know I value their interest in our school. I'm selling, really. I've had exceptional teachers choose our school because in our

selection process they've learned so much about us.

In the course of the interview, I work to clarify my impressions and parts of their file. If a student teaching evaluation suggests the candidate had difficulty in discipline, for example, I want to know just what he or she has done about that. If a math grade is low, I admit I'm discouraged about it and suggest the individual take another math course.

After these interviews, the district school board chooses from among the top three candidates. Lamb finds the involvement of the board important in the small, rural community: "that teacher knows she has board support."

Lamb's recruitment efforts do not end with the selection, however. If she has had three equally qualified contenders, she makes certain the two who were not selected for the position understand that they were considered highly qualified: "Sometimes the top three are so close it's nearly a flip of the coin. I don't want to lose those other two. I follow them for some time, sending Christmas cards, for instance, letting them know we are still interested in them."

The Oregon Department of Education personnel policy guidelines are reminiscent of Lamb's strategies. The guidelines remind Oregon administrators that they will find more qualified applicants if both an ongoing recruitment program and good public relations are maintained:

Show consideration for all applicants. Do not create false hopes. Be tactful and sincere. Maintain contact with applicants, keeping them apprised of the district's employment opportunities.

Selection Procedures

Richard Young, coordinator of educational placement at the University of Oregon, says that the state's districts are increasingly sophisticated in their processes of selection. Sophistication, he says, is a necessity:

To hire a poor teacher is to make a bad investment. Districts are getting very careful about their investments. They must. Those schools are no stronger than their weakest link. I consider the use of group judgment in selection decisions an insurance policy.

The Oregon districts represented in this chapter use a variety of procedures to screen applicants for teaching positions. In each school district, both district-level and local school educators are involved in the process. The major point of

difference is whether the process begins at the district or local school level.

The Process

Statewide, districts of moderate or large size follow one of these two general procedures:

School building administrators, often with members of their staff, screen applicants for vacant teaching positions. After reviewing information about the applicants and interviewing them, the school recommends final candidates to the district office staff for approval. The district office staff member responsible for personnel reviews the applicants' files, verifies references, and approves or disapproves the school's choice.

District personnel officers screen applicants for teaching positions. After examining all information available about the candidates and conducting interviews, the personnel officer recommends five or six candidates to the local school. The five or six candidates are, in the district's opinion, the best qualified for this vacancy at this time. The school administrator, often with members of the school staff, names the preferred candidate. The district office confirms that choice after a check of references.

Gerry Elstun of Hillsboro prefers the second procedure, one commonly used in school districts: "It gives more assurance that the district is complying with equal opportunity regulations in employee selection."

In contrast, Larry Sconce prefers a variation of the first procedure. Local administrators, he says, are in a better position to know the qualifications a particular job requires. In his Roseburg area district, the school principal and his or her selection team review applications stored at the district office, conduct a preliminary phone check of references, interview promising applicants, and refer two or three top candidates to the director of elementary or secondary education. Those surviving that level of review are sent to Sconce for a third interview. At each level of screening, the interviewers use a formal rating sheet and rank-order the applicants they see. To avoid biasing the next interviewer, candidates are sent to the next level unranked.

At the end of the process, Sconce calls the local school administrator to compare the district's ranking with the local school's choice. Consensus is valued but veto power is mutual: Sconce's choice can be vetoed by the principal just as the principal's can be vetoed by Sconce. Sconce admits the process takes time but he insists "this is the most important decision we

make."

Training Administrators

Wherever the selection process begins, building administrators are active in choosing teachers for their staffs. Jamon Kent involves principals in each stage of the screening process. As he describes it, one key to good selection is the training and experience of the employers. In his Beaverton district, principals are trained in how to screen papers, interview candidates, and verify references. In groups, they review applicants' papers, searching for agreed-upon signs of outstanding personal and professional qualities. They look in particular for a professional presentation of information, accuracy and clarity of expression, and evidence of a relevant educational background. They search through each applicant's papers and college transcripts for signs that the potential teacher offers a balance between academic excellence and personal skills.

Kent and his building administrators work to achieve consistency in interviewing skills. As a district, they have defined characteristics they particularly value in teachers: commitment to accomplishment, effective relationships with students, professional orientation, verbal clarity, and ability to manage classrooms and model appropriate behavior. They design interview questions to elicit information about each of these characteristics. Although Kent encourages structure in interviews, he combines structure with flexibility, avoiding any standardized interview format.

One form of training for administrators occurs when districts validate their employment processes by studying how candidates selected in the previous year actually performed in the classroom. Robert Post, assistant superintendent of personnel for the Tigard School District, leads his district in this constant attempt to improve its selection strategies. When a newly hired teacher fails to perform according to the expectations of the district the Tigard administrators review the hiring of that candidate, seeking clues that will perfect the existing system.

Improving Interviews

In their attempts to choose the best qualified teachers, Oregon personnel administrators utilize a variety of selection techniques.

Elstun sees a definite trend statewide toward the use of selection teams rather than single interviewers. He has used team interviewing of teacher candidates for nearly eight years and is convinced that collective decisions are better decisions. He

favors the inclusion of a community member on selection teams: "we're not expecting the parent member to have expertise in teaching, but we value the emotional response of that parent." Community participation is especially helpful in the selection of administrators, he believes. "When we have teachers, parents, and school board members help in selecting a principal, we not only know what that school community really wants, but we know that the leader they select begins with the support of that team." The same rationale has been used as an argument for including teachers in the selection of their new colleagues: the newcomer begins with the valuable support of fellow teachers.

Post is a proponent of a highly structured screening interview, the Teacher Perceiver. This standardized format is intended to show how potential teachers view education and value students. Post believes its major benefit is that it makes the interviewer listen intently. "The candidate has full chance to speak. The interviewer learns to stop 'pulling' for an applicant by asking 'Do you really mean _____?' Instead, we learn to listen for certain indicators that predict teaching competence."

Academic Recommendations

Increasingly, districts are seeking transcripts as evidence of an applicant's academic achievement. Kent considers academic excellence particulary important for secondary school teachers. Post believes that secondary school department heads should be used to verify an applicant's mastery of subject matter: "You can often see the signs of brightness in their papers, but department heads are especially good at verifying specialists' knowledge."

Examinations

In addition to the state-required CBEST examination of basic skills, applicants to some Oregon districts must pass a district-designed test of written expression. Joseph Benninghoff, director of personnel services for the Salem-Keizer School District, administered an English Skills test to applicants as early as 1978. Candidates for certificated positions in the district review two papers written by district students for English usage, spelling, and punctuation. Although Benninghoff believes the test serves a purpose, he is cautious about the use of any one measure as a screening device: "Personnel officers need to interpret all tests carefully. I have reservations about screening out any candidate on the basis of one test if that candidate has successfully completed a four-year preparation program."

The Tigard district has begun asking applicants for teaching positions to demonstrate their written expression skills in a ten-minute exercise. The interviewer selects a topic from a list

prepared by the personnel office. For example, the applicant responds in writing to the statement "An effective school is where all students learn the intended curriculum regardless of social class and family background."

Educational placement coordinator Young also favors a written exercise for applicants, one requiring introspection and candor as well as verbal skills:

> I'd ask applicants to tell me their attitudes toward education, their strengths, their weaknesses, and what they perceive this district wants out of them. Of all those questions, the one about their weaknesses is most crucial. Candidates that can tell me what their weaknesses are and what they're doing about them have my vote.

Young suggests that districts look for specifics in both the interview and in the written assessment. If an applicant admits a history of procrastination, for example, the district should want to know exactly what the applicant is doing about that tendency. "Maybe he's using a goal-setting and monitoring process, or visual reminders of objectives. What's important is that future teachers are aware of their functional weaknesses and are taking significant steps to improve."

As part of his job at the University of Oregon, Young prepares student teachers for the districts' selection procedures. He finds many willing to seek help: "Let's face it--when you're scared, you're willing to listen." He is convinced that his most valuable assistance is not in helping to prepare resumes or files, but in helping potential teachers acknowledge the psychological and emotional factors that inhibit their growth into capable professionals. "I want them to invest in preventative medicine--looking at themselves and making new plans."

In protecting their districts' investment, Oregon school leaders seek teachers who have invested in their own academic and personal growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Whether there is a surplus or a shortage of candidates for teaching positions, the goal of recruitment and selection remains the same: placing the best qualified individual in the right place at the right time. The complexity of the teaching function, a lack of administrative attention to hiring, and inadequate selection techniques can combine to make the hiring of teachers a challenge fraught with perils.

Oregon school districts that commit resources of time and funding to employee selection provide varied examples of effective personnel selection strategies. From their efforts, and from the implications of contemporary research, the following recommendations are drawn:

1. **Develop written policies.** As a beginning, school boards need to adopt written policies that declare the district's commitment to hiring the most qualified teachers, establish guidelines of fairness to candidates, require intensive job analyses prior to hiring, and encourage validation of locally developed procedures.

2. **Treat candidates with justice and respect.** Federal and state legislation mandates standards of fairness to candidates. In addition, districts are ethically bound to maintain honest and supportive communication with each applicant.

3. **Recruit actively and widely.** The need to recruit aggressively is clear when districts seek teachers for inner-city or rural settings, or when they need instructors in high-demand subject or specialization areas. The need for aggressive recruiting--"getting there first"--may be less clear, but no less important, when districts seek any teacher of high quality. Districts increase their odds of finding the "best" when they welcome a large number of applicants.

Educators may learn from the example of industrial leaders who invest in continuous recruitment. They believe that vigorous recruitment improves employee selection, increases their organization's productivity, and reduces employee turnover. Educators can

maintain close relationships with college placement officers and student teacher supervisors.

In addition, continuous recruitment demands efficient record-keeping. District, regional, or statewide computer systems can track candidates and their qualifications.

4. **Be prepared to "sell" the district.** As shortages increase, the most competent candidates for teaching positions can choose from among multiple job offers. Recruitment allows the district a chance to "sell itself" by pointing out the advantages of the job and community. In some areas of the United States, school districts and local businesses cooperate to offer new teachers inducements including graduate school tuition, accelerated sabbaticals, eleven-month contracts, and even reduced rent and restaurant bills. Until recently considered a thing of the past, communities are again producing colorful brochures depicting local attractions and pledging community support to the educator.

Most important, salaries and working conditions motivate applicants' job choices. Educators are at least as influenced as other professionals by offers of increased compensation. In addition, schools that offer a professional environment--manageable class size, supportive inservice, capable leadership, staff cohesion--attract and keep highly qualified teachers.

5. **Train those who select teachers.** Choosing a teacher is a critical yet difficult task. Those who select teachers need training in job analysis, legal guidelines, and multiple assessment techniques. Without training, their choices may be unduly influenced by factors such as attitude congruence, first impressions, and personal biases.

6. **Involve more people in the decision.** Asking final candidates to proceed through a series of assessments and interviews with district personnel is something of an insurance policy in selection. The use of selection teams can increase the reliability of interviews by combining the judgments of individuals. Members of selection teams are not, however, immune to the influence of personal bias: teams must ask themselves in what way even their collective choices may be influenced by an attraction to applicants of similar attitudes or abilities. Hiring a new teacher must be seen as an opportunity to fill gaps in a faculty's talents as well as a chance to find a colleague who will work well with the existing team.

Richard Young of the University of Oregon's Career Planning and Placement Center has developed a system that allows staff members to consider their school's needs and to arrive at consensus about what characteristics they seek in a new member. Such group processes allow a school staff to consciously examine its needs and preferences, to form insights about their choices, and

to develop a structure in which to use those insights.

6. **Consider multiple information about candidates.** A combination of cognitive, academic, and personal characteristics predicts success as a teacher. No one technique offers a panacea in teacher selection. Research supports only multiple, thorough assessment. Districts can screen candidates initially on ability and achievement measures--grade point average, student teaching performance, scores on basic skills and verbal ability tests, and letters of recommendation. After this initial process designed to screen in the most qualified, districts can assess personal skills through structured interviews.

Interviews, tests, and transcripts even in combination may not give a district a clear idea of an individual's teaching skills. Districts are encouraged to experiment with more direct samples of the teaching behavior: live or videotaped demonstrations of teaching, sample unit plans, lessons designed to objectives specified by the interviewers.

7. **Learn from successes and mistakes: validate your process.** Schedule an annual examination of the products of the district's hiring process. How well have the district's new teachers performed in the classroom? What are their areas of strength and weakness? How did or did not the hiring process predict those strengths and weaknesses?

Techniques of selection are best validated at the local level. Districts large enough to support a program evaluation department can use the resources of that office. Regional or statewide consultants can help smaller districts evaluate their choices and procedures. The cost spent in perfecting selection techniques is minimal compared to the financial and emotional cost of dealing with a poor choice, the incompetent teacher.

Postscript: Looking Backward and Forward

Teacher recruitment and selection does not occur as an isolated process within school districts. The quality of those who apply for teaching positions within a specific school and of those who stay in the positions is related to the quality of the school itself. With an increased shortage of teacher candidates, those schools that offer applicants competitive salaries, professional working conditions, effective leadership, and ongoing support are more likely to find and keep capable teachers.

This Bulletin is part of a series on teacher professionalism. The reader is encouraged to review two earlier Bulletins, *It Is Time for Principals to Share the Responsibility for Instructional Leadership with Others* by Keith A. Acheson with Stuart C. Smith (February 1986) and *Collegial Support for Professional Improvement: The Stanford Collegial Evaluation Model* by Susan Stavert Roper and David E. Hoffman (March 1986). These earlier Bulletins describe professional working conditions that may attract and retain teachers of high quality.

In addition, OSSC's first Bulletin of the next school year, tentatively titled *Support for New Teachers: Induction Programs That Work*, by this author, begins where this Bulletin ends. After recruiting and selecting the best among teacher candidates, how does a district support and evaluate that new teacher? Benefits of the training programs for probationary teachers are twofold: the new teacher receives structured assistance and the district acquires a mechanism for careful evaluation of the new employee.

Milt Dennison, director of curriculum and instruction for the West Linn School District, calls the granting of tenure "a district's million dollar decision." That million dollar decision begins with sturdy recruitment and selection procedures. It continues, we shall see, with equally sturdy support systems for the beginning teacher.

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Interviews

Joseph Benninghoff, Director of Personnel, Salem-Keizer School District 24J, Salem, OR. Telephone interview March 19, 1986.

Milt Dennison, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, West Linn School District 3Jt, West Linn, OR. Telephone interview April 9, 1986.

Gerry Elstun, Assistant Superintendent, Hillsboro Union High School District, Hillsboro, OR. Telephone interview December 17, 1985.

Jamon Kent, Director of Personnel, Beaverton School District 48J, Beaverton, OR. Telephone interview March 21, 1986.

Marvel Lamb, Superintendent, Scotts Mills School District 73J, Scotts Mills, OR. Telephone interview March 31, 1986.

Robert Post, Assistant Superintendent, Personnel, Tigard School District 23J, Tigard, OR. Telephone interview March 21, 1986, and personal interview April 21, 1986.

Larry Sconce, Assistant Superintendent, Douglas County School District 4, Roseburg, OR. Telephone interview March 19, 1986.

Richard Young, Coordinator of Educational Placement, Career Planning and Placement Office, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR. Interviews December 17, 1985, and March 19, 1986.

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